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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 002240

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DEPT. FOR EUR/SE AND NEA/I - MICHELE SIDERS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY: POST-ELECTION ENGAGEMENT WITH IRAQI KURDS

REF: A. STATE 120608

[1](#)B. ANKARA 2192

[1](#)C. ANKARA 1990

[1](#)D. ANKARA 1985

[1](#)E. ANKARA 1959

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice Weiner for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: With the accession to the Presidency of former FM Abdullah Gul, the GOT will be looking to change the dynamic of its relationship with Iraqi Kurds and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). While the exact timing is not yet clear, GOT officials indicate Gul will first reach out to President Talabani in an effort to establish direct dialogue between Turkey and Iraqi Kurds. Assuming that is successful, MFA officials believe that direct contacts with KRG President Massoud Barzani could follow. Throughout this process, and as U.S. policy on Iraq develops in the coming months, GOT officials emphasized the need for close coordination with us.

[1](#)2. (C) SUMMARY Cont'd: The GOT has received an invitation to PM Maliki's proposed Expanded Neighbors experts-level prepcon in Baghdad and is prepared to attend wherever and whenever the Iraqis wish to hold such a meeting. They remain concerned, however, that others may not be as accommodating on the Baghdad venue. Regarding the Iraqi leaders' recent agreement, Turkish MFA is supportive and, at our urging, issued a statement late August 29 (see para 8). END SUMMARY

A NEW PRESIDENT, A NEW POLICY

[1](#)3. (C) GOT Deputy Iraq Coordinator Murat Ozcelik (please protect) told us August 29 that newly elected President Gul plans to engage Iraq President Talabani directly in an effort to reach out to Iraqi Kurds. While exact timing remains to be determined, Gul will likely allow the post-election dust to settle before embarking on this effort. Assuming it is successful, Ozcelik said Turkey will then look to find a way to parlay that relationship into direct dialogue with senior KRG officials, including President Barzani. Ozcelik said the GOT realizes that Turkey must start to engage directly with

Iraqi Kurds and that it is in their mutual interest to establish better relations. Finding a way to work around the terrorist PKK issue will be key.

14. (C) The Turkish press has already referred to the possibility that Gul will invite Talabani to visit Ankara, a step Gul's predecessor, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, refused to take. Ozcelik hoped this would not lead Iraqi Kurds to take for granted the establishment of dialogue. The GOT would still have to manage the Turkish military's strong objections to engaging with Iraqi Kurds absent their taking action against the PKK. He emphasized the need for close coordination between the GOT and the USG throughout this process and on broader Iraq policy, particularly as U.S. policy develops in the coming months. Ozcelik expressed the hope that Washington will be prepared to engage with President Gul. We assured him this is the case.

EXPANDED NEIGHBORS PREPCON

15. (C) The GOT has now received the invitation from PM Maliki to attend an Expanded Neighbors experts-level prepcon September 8-9 in Baghdad. Ozcelik said the Turks are prepared to attend such a meeting "anywhere, anytime" but are concerned that others -- including the Saudis, Kuwaitis and Egyptians -- are less likely to be so accommodating regarding the Baghdad venue because of security concerns.

SUPPORT FOR IRAQI LEADERS' AGREEMENT

16. (C) Ozcelik said the GOT considers efforts to bring about

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political reconciliation in Iraq, particularly between Shia and Sunnis, critically important. As such, Turkey will continue to urge VP Hashimi to engage in the political process and, hopefully, bring Tawafuq back into Maliki's government. That was the crux of the Turks' message to Hashimi during his August 23-24 visit to Ankara. Hashimi's approach, according to Ozcelik, seems to be that Maliki's government has no credibility without him, allowing him to continue to press for as much as he can for Iraqi Sunnis. Ozcelik noted that PM Erdogan spoke with Maliki by phone August 23 to ensure Maliki knew of Hashimi's visit first-hand. Maliki reaffirmed his desire for the Turks to engage with Hashimi and urge his continued participation in government. At our urging, MFA issued late August 29 a statement praising the August 26 leaders' agreement. (see text in para 8).

17. (C) COMMENT: Ozcelik is usually more open with us, and forward-leaning, than many of his MFA counterparts. However, we do not believe he would have gone this far out on a limb on a subject as politically charged as establishing senior-level dialogue with the Iraqi Kurds without something concrete on which to base it. Ozcelik told us he had recently spoken privately with Gul about moving Turkey's policy on Iraq forward in the post-election period. We believe his comments reflect Gul's current thinking on the direction that may take. END COMMENT

18. (U) MFA Press Release (unofficial translation)

BEGIN TEXT:

Turkey considers the communique released jointly by the Iraqi leaders on the 26th of August, 2007 in Baghdad, as a step forward within the context of national reconciliation and the political dialogue process in Iraq.

Turkey's previous contributions to the stability in Iraq are well known. The recent fruitful consultations conducted first with Prime Minister Maliki on 7-8 August 2007 and then with Vice President Hashimi on 23-24 August 2007 in Ankara

should be regarded within this framework.

Turkey, in close cooperation with the Iraqi leaders, will continue to contribute to the national reconciliation process in Iraq aimed at bringing stability, peace, and prosperity to this friendly and neighborly country.

END TEXT

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